



Healthy Weight in Schools

Public Health Problem

Data from the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Study (YRBSS) indicated that, nationwide, 15.4 percent of students were at risk for becoming overweight and 13.5 percent of students were overweight. The most recent YRBSS data available from Michigan show that, in 2003, 13.8 percent of students were at risk for becoming overweight and 12.4 percent of students were overweight. Furthermore, 39.4 percent of Michigan students went to physical education (PE) classes on one or more days in an average week when they were in school, and 27.5 percent went to PE classes 5 days in an average week when they were in school. Even though the percentage of youth at risk for becoming overweight and those who were overweight in Michigan is less than the percentages seen nationwide, the rates for Michigan remain too high. Michigan also has one of the highest rates of overweight in the adult population.

Taking Action

The Michigan Model for Comprehensive School Health Education, a skills-based, sequential and comprehensive school health education curriculum, is being used voluntarily in 94 percent of Michigan's school districts. With funding from CDC, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) increased its focus on promoting healthy weight in schools. They have partnered with the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), the state Surgeon General, the United Dairy Industry of Michigan, Michigan Action for Healthy Kids and others to promote coordinated school health programs that focus on physical activity and health.

The MDCH has a Web site, www.mihealthtools.org, to help local schools complete an assessment using the Michigan Healthy Schools Action Tool (HSAT), which is a modified version of CDC's School Health Index.

Implications and Impact

Based on the systems put in place by the Michigan Department of Education and its partners, many significant changes have been implemented at the local school levels that affect physical activity and healthy eating. Some examples include: Altering a school's PE credit policy to eliminate the use of band or sport activities to meet physical education requirements; purchasing equipment and resources to enhance physical activity during recess time; adding healthy food options to the cafeteria offerings, vending machines and school activities; and offering nutrition lessons in K-5 classes. Finally, the MDE has passed state board of education policy to ensure schools create a supportive environment for healthy eating and physical activity, thus reinforcing the messages taught in the classroom.

Contact Information

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